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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Georgia ALERT" contains a series of articles focused on specific issues confronting schools and education today. "Education and the World Around Us: How Will Schools Cope?" (Kristin Summerlin) looks at the 1990s and what this decade will hold for children in school. A section on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) education by Merri Sheffield contains four articles: "Students and AIDS: A Doctor's Crusade," "AIDS: What You Should Know," "Gwinnett County: A Case Study," and "One Family's Story." Other sections focus on teenage pregnancy ("Giving Teen Mothers a Second Chance at School" by Kristin Summerlin), parent education ("Helping Parents Prepare Their Children for School" by Kristin Summerlin), environmental education ("Expanding the Classroom to Encompass the World" by Wagers Chenault), drug and alcohol education ("Georgia Schools Go Beyond 'Just Say No'" by Judy Whidby Hall), homeless students ("Missing School Is Just One of Many Traumas" by Gale Samuels), and teaching tolerance ("A World of Difference" by Kristin Summerlin). (NB)

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A Look at Education's Role Today

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Education and the World Around Us

How can schools cope

• with AIDS? • with homelessness?
• with drugs and alcohol? • with environmental concerns

CG 022679

Spring 1990

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the new ALERT!

This issue represents the culmination of many months of thought and work, and we hope you like the results.

You probably noticed our new look right away. We hope you find the design attractive, interesting and easy to read. The new size should be easier to handle, too; we've heard that the old magazine was hard to hold onto because its size made it hard to file away. In addition to photographs, we'll be giving you more graphics, including line drawings, charts and tables.

We've aimed at a crisper, more modern and professional look. To keep up with the times, we've switched from conventional typesetting and paste-up to desktop publishing. ALERT was designed on a Macintosh using PageMaker software and then output on a Linotronic to attain a higher quality image.

One difference you might not have noticed at first is a slight shift in editorial focus. We're still committed to providing you with information on innovative programs in Georgia schools, but we want to focus more on specific issues confronting education today. While you will still find some stories pinpointed in a particular school or school system, others will encompass several schools and their solutions to common problems.

We want to give you more of the information you can use, so you'll also find more related stories, including how tos, pointers from the trailblazers and resource listings.

Another change is in the way we get the magazine to you. In the past, an outside company has kept up with our mailing list, but we've now taken on this responsibility. We've created a new mailing list and are maintaining it ourselves, so if you have corrections or address changes, send them directly to us. The address is ALERT, Public Information and Publications, Georgia Department of Education, 2052 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5010.

One thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to you, our readers, and to the children of our state. We welcome any questions or comments you might have, including ideas for future issues. Let us know what you think – what you like and what you don't like. ALERT is your magazine, too, and together we'll make it the best it can be.

Kristin L. Summerlin
Managing Editor

On the cover...

A mother cradles her two children just moments before dying of complications from AIDS. The cover photo and the one on page 5 were taken by Maryann Bates of the *Macon Telegraph and News*. For a look at what one Georgia doctor is doing to teach young people about AIDS, see page 4.

Education and the world around us

By Kristin L. Summerlin

How will schools cope?

The turn of a new year always brings much speculation about the future, especially when it marks the beginning of a new decade – even more when that decade tolls the end of a millenium.

People who work with children are intimately acquainted with the future, although conscious thoughts about it may be blocked by more immediate issues: lost homework, forgotten lunch money, playground fights. But, as we say over and over – almost by rote – our children are our future. Through our work with them we can create a future of hope or a future of despair.

And what do the '90s hold for the children in our schools? One thing, at least, is sure: Schools will never again function in a vacuum, apart from the concerns, problems and issues that affect the outside world.

When a child comes to school in 1990, we no longer have the luxury of assuming she's eaten a good breakfast, been kissed by a loving parent and shooed out the door to catch the school bus. More and more children live in homes with only one parent – or none. More and more are hungry or even homeless. Many find themselves pregnant. Many are addicted to drugs or alcohol – and even more live with addicted parents. Health officials predict an "epidemic" of babies born to mothers addicted to crack cocaine, and we can count on more schoolchildren (and teachers and administrators) being infected with the AIDS virus.

Consider these statistics from the U.S. House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families.

- Most parents of preschoolers – mothers and fathers – are now in the workforce.
- More than 13 million children live in poverty today – three million more than in 1979.
- Poor families are no longer confined to the unemployed, the inner cities or any particular race. Today more than 20 million American poor work every day.
- In rural areas, two thirds of the poor are working families.
- Families with children are the fastest growing segment of homeless people.
- Homicides committed by young people 15 to 24 years old increased by 17 percent from 1985 to 1986.
- Each year, 375,000 babies are reported born hooked to drugs. With the advent of crack cocaine, rural areas report a shocking increase of drug-addicted babies.
- In a 1989 survey of America's 18 most populous cities, 15 reported three to four times as many addicted babies as in 1985.

Obviously, many of today's children begin their lives in adversity. Because these children often have a harder time achieving in school, there is rising concern that by the year 2000, America won't have enough literate workers to keep our economy viable. Already, dropouts cost $240 billion each year in lost productivity, welfare, crime and incarceration. How can schools respond to the changing world around us? How can we improve conditions for our children, including those born to poverty, homelessness, abuse?

Not only are societal pressures increasing for children today, but tomorrow can look pretty bleak, too. Our children will have to find a way to live in and heal an environment ravaged by the generations that came before. They will have to find a way to live and work together in an increasingly multiracial, multicultural, global society. And they will have to do so in a work setting that emphasizes communication and the ability to process information over manual dexterity and more basic work skills.

What can Georgia schools do to ensure that our children get what they need today in order to succeed tomorrow? In this issue are stories of Georgia schools that find themselves addressing tomorrow's concerns today. From them you'll learn that the most important thing is to start now. Don't wait, assuming that things are going to somehow get back to "normal." Remember to work with the whole child – not just his brain – and with his family. And finally, realize that the values of curiosity, cooperation and interdependence learned in the classroom will last a lifetime and reach far more of the world than just that one child. ◆

AIDS Education

Students and AIDS: A doctor's crusade

By Merri Sheffield

Debra was 16 and full of plans for the future – until, following a routine physical, doctors gave her the news that she had AIDS.

How could Debra have AIDS? She isn't in any of the high-risk groups. She isn't homosexual, doesn't use intravenous drugs and hasn't had a blood transfusion. Debra is just an average Macon teen, but, like many of her peers, she is sexually active and has been since she was 14.

"I'd seen things on TV about AIDS, but I didn't pay any attention because I didn't think it could happen to me," said Debra (not her real name). Now she knows that AIDS can happen to anyone.

AIDS statistics

In Georgia 36 children under the age of 13 have AIDS, and there are 14 teenagers with the disease. Nationwide 115,158 people have the disease – 2,394 are under the age of 20. These figures include only those with identified cases of AIDS; they do not include those who have the virus in their blood but don't know it.

As the number of AIDS cases increases and the disease moves into all segments of society, we must all face the reality that unless we educate ourselves and our children the virus will continue to spread and countless people will die. This national crisis has placed parents, teachers and community leaders in the role of AIDS educators. For some, AIDS education is a confusing burden, but for others, like Harold Katner, M.D., it is a crusade to save our young people from a horrific death.

> It's easy for students to ignore the dangers of AIDS – until they see the pictures.

Katner, a Mercer University research professor who specializes in infectious diseases, including AIDS, is taking his AIDS education campaign into Georgia schools in hopes that by showing the emotional and psychological impact AIDS has its victims, he may empower young people to think twice before having unsafe sex or using intravenous drugs.

The "AIDS doctor from Macon" has combined his knowledge and expertise with the stories of his patients into a slide show that depicts the graphic realities of AIDS. Debra is one of Katner's 170 patients with AIDS. She and others have volunteered to let Katner tell their stories in hopes that through learning about their lives and deaths others might be spared from the torment they have suffered.

Slides are clinical, graphic

Katner began his mission in 1983 by educating the gay community in Louisiana. The slides he used then and now are clinical and graphic – in some cases, horrifying – because he says people need to see the truth about the disease and the effects it has on the people it strikes.

It is easy to ignore the devastation caused by AIDS until you see the pictures of Katner's patients. When you witness a man's face and eye being eaten away by Karposi's sarcoma (a rare form of cancer that strikes AIDS patients), or see an uncontrollable herpes sore devour a man's buttocks or a fetus from a woman with AIDS born so deformed that it isn't recognizable as a human being, you learn the horrors of what it means to lose your immune system. AIDS itself doesn't kill, it just renders you defenseless against the everyday germs that healthy people's bodies resist daily with no problem.

Introducing real people

Katner said some male students start out laughing nervously about the sensitive subject, but when they see a slide of a man's scrotum swollen to the size of a large grapefruit because of a condition related to AIDS, the giggles stop and students sit up and pay attention.

After seeing studies that showed a drop in the transmission rate in gay males related to the fact that they had seen a friend die of AIDS, Katner was encouraged that his slide presentation is taking the right approach by introducing his audiences to the faces behind the statistics. As the slides flip by, teens are introduced to real people with the

In his slide show, Harold Katner, M.D., introduces Georgia students to real people who have AIDS. Many of his patients have agreed to allow him to show their pictures and tell their stories in hopes of helping others.

disease. When they see their "new friends" consumed by the effects of AIDS, it affects them much more deeply than a textbook description. Then Katner tells of their deaths, the loss is felt throughout the audience.

Switched to teens

Katner switched his education campaign from homosexual males to teenagers in 1986, when he noticed more and more young people coming into his office with the disease. His patients were out of high school when the symptoms appeared, but detailed histories revealed that they had contracted the disease while in their teens.

One of the scariest things about AIDS is that you can have it and not know it. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS can exist in the bloodstream for five to 10 years before making a person ill; therefore teens may not realize that they or their sex partners have the virus until years later.

Teenagers often think that if they can't see something, it can't hurt them or that they are impervious to danger and will live forever. Katner says that when dealing with AIDS, such bravado can be deadly, because a person doesn't have to appear sick to transmit the virus. If HIV is in a person's blood, he or she can infect someone else.

"Every day people come to my office and say, 'Doc how did I get AIDS? I've only been to bed with clean people, people that didn't look sick. They didn't have sores; they didn't have any of the problems I've seen pictures of,' Dr. Katner said. "I tell them they had no symptoms because their immune system isn't weak enough yet for them to be sick."

But the doctor says the virus unfortunately doesn't stop when it has destroyed only half of your immune system and you are still able to fight off infections. "It continues to destroy your system until you get sick with a fatal condition, and you die. It may take a year, two years, maybe even four years, but you will die," he said.

"Kids have to understand that you can't look at someone and say that they don't have AIDS because they have this much money or are that color, or that they are religious or have this job or that job. It is in every segment of our society," Katner said. "We have to understand that ministers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, IV drug abusers, prostitutes, heterosexuals and homosexuals are all at risk."

Concerned about teen epidemic

Along with the increases in the number of young people with AIDS, Katner is concerned about Georgia's "epidemic" of sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers and the rising number of teenage pregnancies in the state.

Herpes, syphilis and chancroid, sexually transmitted diseases that are spreading throughout our teenage population, cause sores on the vagina and penis, making it easier for the AIDS virus to get into the blood during intercourse. Our skin is the strongest barrier against the virus, but Katner says those sores break the skin, making the person vulnerable.

During the past two years Katner says there has been a 128-percent increase in sexually transmitted diseases among teens and young adults in Macon. There has been a 400-percent increase in Waycross and similar high percentages of increase throughout the state.

Teenagers often think that if they can't see something, it can't hurt them or that they are impervious to danger and will live forever.

The doctor says the increase in sexual activity related to crack cocaine use in rural areas of south Georgia is partly responsible for the increases in sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS.

Although abstinence is traditionally encouraged, Katner says society can't afford to hide from the fact that many teens are sexually active. "We (Georgia) have the third highest pregnancy rate in the country. Obviously someone out there is having sex, because girls are getting pregnant. They aren't using safer sex (sex with a condom) or they wouldn't be getting pregnant and we wouldn't be seeing alarming increases in sexually transmitted diseases. It would be easier if they were abstaining, but many of them are not," Katner said.

Another factor that places teens at risk is that they are often viewed as "safe" by men who fear getting AIDS. Time after time Katner says his patients have felt protected by having sex with the teenagers they picked up at bowling alleys, skating rinks and movies theatres throughout rural Georgia.

Katner, shown examining a patient, stresses that AIDS cannot be acquired through casual touch. He touches patients every day.

Upon learning that he had AIDS, one of Katner's patients said, "Doc, I can't have AIDS. I've only been to bed with safe women. High school girls."

"I told him, 'Young man, you may not have gotten it from a high school girl, but you sure could have given it to one.' Who he infected, I don't know; who he exposed, I don't know," Katner recalls, adding that, unable to fight off a condition that affected his blood's ability to clot, the 19-year-old man bled to death three weeks later without revealing any names.

The more his concern grew, the more Katner wanted to take his education programs into the schools, but it was hard to convince school administrators that his presentation wasn't too graphic. Undaunted, he took the program he had been using in the gay community and started presenting it to physicians, business groups and community organizations, including several PTAs.

Although Wilkinson County schools and several private schools invited him in, he didn't find wide acceptance until he presented the slide show at a state school superintendents' meeting. Following the meeting he was invited to give his presentation in Dublin, Americus and Bibb County schools.

When requests began pouring in from across the state, Katner accepted as many as possible, but he couldn't care for his patients in Macon and respond to all the requests at the same time. The answer to the problem was a videotape of the presentation which can be used in schools all over Georgia.

The Georgia Textile Manufacturer's Association, which had seen the presentation, is sponsoring the videotapes and making them available to all local schools through the Georgia Department of Education media center. The GTMA, according to Katner, recognized the potential human and economic toll of AIDS and wanted to help fight the spread of the disease. WMAZ, Channel 13 in Macon, volunteered its services in taping the videos.

Katner and GTMA's Tom Salyers worked closely with Gaile Davis, the department's K-12 AIDS consultant, to ensure that the tapes meet the standards outlined in the Quality Core Curriculum and guidelines set by state board policy and Georgia law.

There are two versions of the program — a 35-minute version for middle schools and conservative high schools and a 45-minute version for general high school use and for teacher education.

Both tapes contain graphic photos and stories of AIDS patients; however, in the middle school version some of the more graphic slides were removed, and condoms, anal intercourse and other sexual descriptions are not discussed in detail. Abstinence is discussed in both tapes, as required by state board policy for AIDS education.

Katner believes it is important to begin AIDS education in the middle grades because while most students are not sexually active, they are curious enough to ask open, honest questions. When students get older and into high school, they tend to be more inhibited. However, the doctor feels he is especially hitting home with high schoolers. Although several high school students have fainted during the presentation, no middle school students have ever fainted.

The edited version of the presentation has been shown to students as early as the fifth grade. Katner, who often takes his seven-year-old son along with him to presentations, says parents should not fear introducing AIDS information to children at an early age. "They are going to learn about AIDS one way or the other," he said. "If AIDS is introduced within a package, for example as part of a sex education class that deals with all the things I'm dealing with, there isn't a problem. I can go in and be very frank, open and explicit, and it is not too early. If young students are not prepared and are from a puritanical background, they may be shocked."

Katner says that he does not feel his program encourages intercourse; in fact, it may be a deterrent. The doctor says it is important for parents to have an open dialogue with their children of all ages so they don't feel inhibited and can be comfortable talking about AIDS and human sexuality. Katner says the students he has talked to are from all walks of life, but they almost all want to know more about human sexuality and AIDS.

Standing before a group of Bibb County students recently, Katner greeted the group as he always does. "We've got a very big problem. I'm going to be frank with you," he said "I'm going to talk to you like adults. I'm going to show you some very ugly pictures — not to scare you, but to teach you about this disease. You have to realize what you are facing. This is not something that you can go out, have sex with somebody, get AIDS, go get a shot and it goes away. It's not that easy."

After seeing Katner's program, Rufus Johnson, principal of Lanier A, a ninth- and 10th-grade school in Macon, said, "I see so

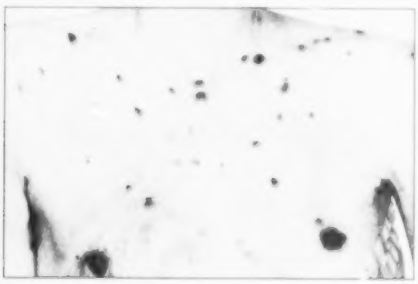
many kids who are pregnant at school. I thought dealing with kids who are suicidal or abused was the main problem, but I see worse. I can't see it now, but the kids I am working with today might die seven years from now from something that they are getting now. I knew AIDS was bad, but I had never seen pictures. It is so sad to see this."

Johnson said that after seeing the presentation he had no reservations about having the program presented at his school. "Young people need to see this, and see it early. Kids become sexually active so early. It is important for them to know the truth about the disease."

"When you get AIDS it doesn't just hurt you. It hurts everyone around you. It hurts your family, your friends, your lovers, your girlfriends and boyfriends," Katner said to the students. "I'm here because I don't want you getting AIDS. All of this is preventable. All we have is education. I am here to educate you. You have to help me educate others.

◆

Copies of Katner's AIDS education slide shows, "Dr. Katner Teaches About AIDS" for grades 6-12 and "Dr. Katner Speaks on AIDS" for grades 9-12 and staff development, are available from the Georgia Department of Education through local school media centers. The only charge is a $3.50 duplication charge. A blank videotape must be provided when making a request; both videos can be recorded on the same tape. For more information about the Katner videotapes, contact Gaile Davis, Health Education Consultant, Georgia Department of Education, 1952 Twin Towers East, Atlanta 30334-5040. ◆



This slide shows a patient with Kaposi's sarcoma.

Number of people identified with AIDS in the United States

	Male	Female
0-13	1,060	887
13-19	357	90
20-29	20,606	2,892
30-39	48,290	4,884
40-49	22,920	1,427
50-59	7,798	508
60+	2,271	568

67,382 Americans with AIDS have died.
No one can say how many unidentified cases exist.

Number of identified cases of AIDS in Georgia

0-13	36
13-19	14
20-29	744
30-39	1,518
40-49	586
49+	220

1,813 Georgians with AIDS have died.

These January 1990 statistics are from the Department of Human Resources Office of Infectious Disease in Atlanta.

AIDS: What you should know*

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, commonly known as AIDS, is a disease caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The virus can damage the brain and destroy the body's ability to fight off illness. AIDS itself doesn't kill. It attacks the body's natural immune system, which destroys germs in your body. Once the immune system is weakened, infections such as pneumonia, cancer and other illnesses invade the body. It is these diseases that can kill.

AIDS is not spread through casual contact. The HIV virus is transported in blood, seminal and vaginal fluids and mother's milk. For the AIDS virus to get into your blood system (where it lives in your body), you must exchange these body fluids with someone who has the virus in his or her blood. Body fluids can get into the blood system through openings in the skin, including cuts, punctures and sores.

The AIDS virus is most commonly spread by having unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex with an infected person or by sharing hypodermic needles with infected intravenous drug users. Babies whose mothers are infected can also be infected at birth, and there appears to be some risk to babies breastfeeding from infected women. Traces of the virus have been found in saliva, and although no cases have been reported in which the virus was transmitted by kissing, experts advise

(Continued on page 8)

**This information was compiled from information from the Centers for Disease Control.*

AIDS- What you should know

(Continued from page 7)

that you avoid deep, prolonged "French" kissing with anyone infected with the virus.

People who receive blood transfusions have a slight chance of becoming infected, but contamination of the blood supply is not a major concern because tests are available to screen for HIV. Blood donors are not at risk because needles are changed for each donor and no blood is exchanged.

You can't catch AIDS from hugging, shaking hands or standing near an infected person. Because the virus cannot live for long outside the body, it is not spread by bed linens, eating utensils, chairs, dishes, toilet seats, door knobs or swimming pools.

To protect yourself from the AIDS virus, avoid promiscuous sex and illegal drugs. Couples who are not infected, do not use drugs and who have a mutually faithful, single-partner relationship are protected from AIDS. Those who do not know their partner's sexual history or who are not certain that their partner has never been exposed to the AIDS virus should practice "safe sex" by properly using condoms. You should avoid illegal drugs, but if you do use drugs, never share needles. When handling blood or body fluids use precautions such as wearing rubber gloves.

Remember, most people who have the virus look and feel fine. They may not know they are carrying the disease; therefore, they may not be able to tell you.

When talking with young people about AIDS, keep in mind their knowledge and experiences. Experts say that when talking with children, many adults focus on sexually explicit information and do not provide enough of the answers to their questions. Most children are concerned about the risks they and their parents face and the possibility that the disease could kill them or their loved ones. It is important to give children information, but it is just as important to address their fears. People of all ages need to know about communicable diseases, including AIDS, and the steps that can be taken to protect themselves and their loved ones from being infected by the HIV virus.

To help you learn more about AIDS education for children, the Centers for Disease Control offers a 24-hour toll-free National AIDS Hotline (1-800-342-AIDS). Seven days a week the hotline offers answers to any questions that you or a young person may have about the HIV infection and AIDS. All calls are free, and you need not give your name. The service is available in Spanish (1-800-344-SIDA) and for the hearing-impaired (1-800-AIDS-TTY). The CDC also offers an AIDS Prevention Guide specifically for parents and other adults concerned about educating young people. This publication and others dealing with AIDS and HIV infection can be ordered through the National AIDS Information Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6003, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 1-800-458-5231.

More AIDS information is available from the following resources.

• National Association of State Boards of Education 1012 Cameron Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314, (703) 684-4000. Contact Lynn Wilson for school-related publications on AIDS.

• Georgia Department of Education Division of General Instruction Health Education 1954 Twin Towers East Atlanta, Georgia 30334 (404) 656-2685 or (404) 656-2414 Contact Gaile G. Davis or J. Rendel Stalvey for curriculum assistance with comprehensive health education.

• American Red Cross 1925 Monroe Drive Atlanta, Georgia 30324 (404) 881-9800 Contact Marilyn Self, Jo Otis, Margaret Draganac or Leslie Ewing for AIDS education programs for communities, businesses, schools and professional groups. A slide/tape presentation, video programs and pamphlets are also available. Some AIDS information is available through all local American Red Cross Chapters. ◆

Gwinnett County: A case study

It is the call you hoped would never come. The parent on the other end of the line says, "My child is one of your students, and I thought you should know that she has AIDS." What do you do?

Panic may be your first instinct, but Gwinnett County school officials have a better idea: Be prepared.

Thanks to early preparation, Brett Lykin, a nine-year-old third grader in Duluth, has been able to go school, learn and make friends without any problems, despite the fact that he has AIDS.

Why was Brett accepted with open arms and little or no fear while children like Ryan White were chased out of their homes and schools? Leslie Lambert, Gwinnett's health and physical education coordinator, said having a policy in place and a school administration that cares about the rights and needs of each student can make all the difference.

In 1986, Alton Crews, then Gwinnett County's superintendent, realized that it was only a matter of time before schools had to deal with AIDS. Rather than taking a wait-and-see approach, he called for the formation of an AIDS Task Force to develop an AIDS policy and curriculum for the school system. When Brett's parents notified school administrators that he would be entering school this fall, the policy was there, ready to kick into action.

The policy, which allows students and teachers with AIDS to remain in class as long as they are healthy enough to attend, was the foundation for AIDS education program and sensitivity training for students. Lambert says the combination of those three elements, along with incredible support from the faculty, the student body and the community, smoothed the path for Brett.

Pointers and suggestions

Hoping that others can learn from Gwinnett's County's experiences, Lambert offers the following suggestions for developing an AIDS policy and curriculum.

- **Involve the community** in the development of the plan. Select a cross-sectional task force to write your policy and over see development of your curriculum. Include all segments of the population, but don't defeat your purpose by naming extremists to the panel. If the panel includes only the extremes, members spend all of their time arguing and nothing will be accomplished.
- **Do research.** Your policy and curriculum must be based on fact, not fear or speculation. You should talk to doctors, lawyers, public health officials and health educators to gather the correct information.
- **Play devil's advocate.** Ask yourself every question you can think of and then make sure you have the information you need to answer the questions with facts. Also create possible scenarios and make sure that your policy addresses every situation.
- **Be open.** Keep the media and the public updated on your progress. Invite public scrutiny of your proposed policy and curriculum. Ask citizens for their comments and then listen to what they have to say. Make sure that every group has a chance to voice concerns. But remember, you don't want a small percentage of people directing what you do for the good of all public school children.
- **Get the media involved.** By taking the information to the media, you can get the news out and eliminate suspicions that you are trying to hide something. Once the plan is developed, the media can help notify the community about your proposals.

Although Gwinnett County had an AIDS policy no one knew how it would work in reality, according to Jane Coomer, the principal at Chattahoochee Elementary School, where Brett attends class. When the day came to implement the policy, administrators had another obstacle: Chattahoochee was a new school, and Coomer was a new principal at a new school in a new city and state. The faculty had never worked together, and the student body was to be drawn from from several different areas. Many of the children didn't know each other, and the parents didn't know the principal, the teachers or the students.

People pulled together, and, without incident, Brett was able to go to school. There were no big problems.

- Jane Coomer

The amazing thing, according to Coomer, is that everything worked. "People pulled together, and, without incident, Brett was able to go to school. There were no big problems: No standing around in the hall speculating on 'who was the AIDS child.' No parents tried to remove their children from class. No curious reporters were lurking around the halls," Coomer said. Until several months later, when Brett stood up during show-and-tell and announced that he was the student with AIDS, no one at the school, except his teacher, the school counselor and the principal, was told the truth.

"I kept waiting for everything to explode, but it never did," Nancy Ramsey, Brett's teacher, remembers. "I don't see how it could have been any easier."

Although it seemed easy, the truth is that hours of preparation went into making Brett's school experience positive. To guarantee similar results in other systems, Lambert, Coomer, Terry and Brett offer the following suggestions.

- **Be yourself.** Treat the child as you would any other. If you aren't yourself when dealing with a child with AIDS, the child and others will sense the difference. The child's right to anonymity might be endangered.
- **Don't set the child up as something extra-special.** Allow him or her to be "just another child in the classroom." Terry warns that at times this can be difficult because it can be hard not to show extra concern for the child.
- **Notify teachers** as soon as possible. Tell teachers that a child with AIDS will be attending the school. When making the announcement, have doctors on hand to talk about the disease and answer any questions teachers might have.

Coomer credits the level of acceptance among teachers to the "instant education and question-answering session" following the announcement that a child with AIDS would be attending the school. Among the questions raised by Chattahoochee teachers were, "What role do we play in answering parents questions?" "If the child is in my class will I know it?" "What will happen if no parent will send his or her child to my classroom, and the only child I have to teach is the child with AIDS?" "Is he a nice kid?"

- **Inform parents.** When notifying parents that a child with AIDS will be attending your school immediately give them a packet of information covering the basics of AIDS, your systems policy and the procedure that will be followed. Soon after informing parents provide them with the same AIDS education program offered to teachers. Reassure parents that their children are not at risk.
- **Localize the situation** by announcing which school the child with AIDS attends. His or her anonymity will still be protected within the school community, and hundreds of parents whose children attend other schools will not be left wondering, "Does the child sitting next to my childhave AIDS?"

- **Offer "sensitivity training"** to your students. Through games such as "Even Though I'm Different, I Still Belong" and "Fishing for Feelings", Robin Neeld, Chattahoochee's counselor, was able to help children handle their own feelings and relate to other people's feelings. Thanks to a small student/counselor ratio, Neeld was able to work with every class at least once a week for the first six weeks of school.

  When Brett announced that he had AIDS, one of his classmates offered him one of her favorite toys, told him that she loved him and that she would pray for him. Coomer believes the counselor's work made it possible for the students to accept Brett, as well as other children who were "different."

- **Behave as if every child had a communicable disease.** In other words, stress proper hygiene for everyone, and do not handle anyone's blood without using protective rubber gloves. At Chattahoochee Elementary all school personnel keep rubber gloves handy. Have children clean their own wounds, and encourage them to go directly to an adult if anyone becomes ill or is hurt.

- **Develop a sense of trust** between your school and the community. Coomer believes that, given information and the chance to understand, most people will respond positively.

Gwinnett County isn't the only Georgia school system that will encounter a child with AIDS. It's just one of the first. But through experience Coomer and Lambert say they learned never to underestimate the positive impact of education, cooperation and understanding.

For more information on Gwinnett County's AIDS policy and curriculum contact Leslie Lambert at 52 Gwinnett Drive., Lawrenceville, Georgia 30245. To get more tips on handling AIDS at the school level, contact Jane Coomer, Chattahoochee Elementary School, 2930 Albion Farm Road, Duluth, Georgia, 30136. To learn more about the sensitivity training used at Chattahoochee Elementary, contact Robin Neeld. ◆

One Family's Story

"We're today's pioneers paving the way for other kids who have remained anonymous out of fear of the unknown," Steve Lykins said, reflecting on his son's being among the first students with AIDS to attend school in Georgia.

Lykins and his wife, Marti, were devastated when they first learned their son had been infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) through transfusions of contaminated blood following his premature birth. In addition to the high mortality rate associated with AIDS, the newspapers were filled with stories of children with AIDS and their families being chased out of schools and towns. Fearing that their son would face a similar plight, Lykins contacted the schools anonymously to ask what provisions were made for children with AIDS in Gwinnett County.

The parents were pleasantly surprised that a policy was in place, but they wondered how effective it would be when put into action. Two years later, in 1989, when they decided to tell Brett and the school system about his condition, they "sat on pins and needles," worried that teachers, students and parents might respond negatively.

"It was amazing. Everything went great," Lykins said. "We had support from the top. None of the teachers balked at having Brett in their class. PTA members, who could have responded with adversity, asked honest questions and tried to understand and be compassionate."

Protecting their son's anonymity required the Lykins family to sit back quietly and watch as Brett's case unfolded. They talked with reporters on the telephone but remained anonymous. Only after Brett himself chose to announce that he was the student with AIDS did his parents speak out publicly.

"I want everyone to know that there is no chance that I would have allowed Brett to attend school if he posed any threat to other students. As a father I would not ask anyone to put his child at risk. Truth is, I worry about Brett all the time because the other students pose a great threat to him," Lykins said. "Although he looks like a healthy happy boy, his body can't fight off germs. What would be a minor illness for other children is a major threat to Brett.

"But we know that the psychological benefits of Brett being in school with other children are worth the risks he faces. We've learned that our mental health is reflected in our physical health. Brett being in school has made a profound difference in his life."

Lykins says he is confident that doctors are right about how difficult it is to catch AIDS and that the HIV virus is not transmitted through casual contact.

"Brett has AIDS, but that doesn't stop us from acting just like any other boy and his dad. I steal bites of this hamburgers and sips out of his soft drinks. At Disney World we took turns licking off the same ice cream cone," Lykins said. "We hug and kiss and play with each other all the time. If you could get HIV from casual contact, I'd have it – and I don't. I've been tested, and don't have AIDS."

Lykins hopes that by showing that a child with AIDS can go to school and be accepted just like other children, his family will give other families with AIDS the courage to come forward and take their lives out of the closet. ◆

Teen Pregnancy

Giving teen mothers a second chance at school

By Kristin L. Summerlin

Kris expects to graduate from high school next year, but she's eight months pregnant. Twanna had a baby when she was 13. Wanda dropped out of school after a teacher chastized her for missing class because of morning sickness.

Jill, now 18, dropped out after the eighth grade. She ran away from home at 14, was placed in a group home, ran away again, got married and had a baby by the time she was 16. When she became pregnant with her second child, she thought she'd never have another chance at school.

But Jill, Twanna, Kris, Wanda and 18 other teenage mothers do have a second chance, thanks to a year-old program at Dalton High School. The Second Chance program is designed to encourage students who are pregnant or who are parents to stay in school – to come back to school if they've already dropped out. Second Chance combines a parenting class, a support group and coordinated health and social services for the mothers with on-site daycare for their babies and toddlers. The mothers go to their regular high school classes secure in the knowledge that their babies are properly tended.

"This program gave me a chance to come back to school," Jill said. "I had always wanted to do it because I enjoyed school, but I didn't think I could. When I got pregnant again, I thought I'd never come back. I couldn't afford to pay a babysitter."

> Dalton's program provides a parenting class, counseling and a daycare center.

Jill's story is far from unusual. Each day in America, 2,753 teenagers become pregnant, 1,287 teen mothers give birth, and 1,868 students drop out of school. Georgia ranks fifth in the country in the number of teen pregnancies. In fact, according to Georgia Department of Human Resources statistics for 1985, one of every 10 girls between ages 15 and 19 became pregnant (25,864), as did 985 girls between 10 and 14 years old.

At Dalton High about a fifth of the dropouts are teenage mothers, according to social worker Wendy Hansen, who administers Second Chance. Counselors at the school did a study that tracked every member of the class of 1988 from freshman year to senior year to find out what happened to them. School officials wanted to know how many students had dropped out, where they'd gone, what had happened in their lives. Of the 111 dropouts from that class, 68 were girls, and 23 of those (20 percent) were unemployed girls at home with children.

"That study really focused the school system on teenage mothers as a large group that we can identify and help," Hansen said. "There already was a lot of concern in the community about keeping kids in school because of our Stay in School Task Force. Here was a clearcut need, and we could do something about it."

Why not work on prevention instead? "When you talk about preventing teen pregnancy, first you have to identify the causes, and those aren't very clear," Hansen said. "We already have sex education classes, and there are agencies in Dalton that dispense birth control, but the school system wasn't interested in getting more into that type of business. What we were interested in was helping students stay in school and graduate. For a very large group, the fact that they had a baby – and could not afford child care – was what prevented that."

Serves two at-risk groups

Couple the fact that teen mothers almost always drop out of school with research indicating that the single most significant variable in a student's academic achievement is the education level of the mother, and you have a huge problem – or, seen another way, a golden opportunity to help two distinct groups of students at risk.

"When this program was first conceived, we thought, 'Okay, these girls have babies. We've got to provide a daycare center for them.'" Hansen said. "We didn't think about the babies being another group of children

at risk until we had the program going. Then we thought, 'Wow, what a golden opportunity!' The sky's the limit on what we can do to help prevent these kids from coming along and being behind, being learning disabled, all the things that statistics tell us they may be just by virtue of being the children of teenage parents."

Within the home economics wing of Dalton High are two rooms with picture windows looking out onto the hallway: a nursery for infants and one for toddlers. The nurseries are staffed by two daycare aides, supplemented by students in the regular child development classes. The students are assigned to work in the nurseries as a part of their lab experience.

Linda Looper, the child care aide who supervises the student daycare workers, said the arrangement benefits everyone involved.

"The mothers really like knowing their children are close by. If there's an emergency, we can go get them in a matter of minutes," she said. "And it's great experience for the child development students. Some of them had never touched a baby and were scared to death at first. Others came in thinking it would be nice to have a baby, but their feelings changed as they worked with the children on good days and bad, changed their dirty diapers, dealt with temper tantrums. They're learning the responsibility entailed in taking care of children day in and day out."

Learning about babies

The babies and toddlers, of course, get the benefit of lots of love and attention. How do the mothers feel about having other students involved with their children?

Twanna said, "It's okay, because they're learning, too. They're learning what babies are; they see how hard it is and how fun it is, the good parts and the bad parts. And I think it's teaching them not to get pregnant as a teenager."

While the girls say they don't volunteer to discuss the pitfalls of being a teen mother with other students, they do think it important for other girls to realize how hard life can be for a young mother struggling to raise a child and go to school at the same time. Being a teenage parent means giving up part of one's own youth to care for another child.

Wanda cradles her baby, Emilio, in Dalton High's daycare center. She dropped out after a teacher chastized her for missing so many classes during her pregnancy. The Second Chance program works to improve understanding of teen mothers' needs.

"You just miss things," Jill said. "I've never gone to a prom, and I probably never will. If I see one on television, I get jealous. I think about going to the prom with all my friends, and what kind of dress I'd like to have worn, and I just get jealous. If you're not with the baby's father, you don't have normal boyfriends. Boyfriends don't usually like to put up with a baby going on dates. And I have to take my kids with me, because I can't afford a babysitter."

Friends are another problem. Although the girls have become "like family" to each other since joining Second Chance, they often find they don't have much in common with other teens.

"You can still have friends, but it's hard because you can't do things with them," Jill said. "You just can't pick up and go somewhere. You have to worry about things like, 'Can the baby go there?' I end up not going anywhere anymore. I have a little time in the morning and a little time in the afternoon when they're not grouchy because they've taken their naps, and it's hard."

Good daycare for their children is merely the first and most visible obstacle the girls must overcome to remain in school. Handling the stigma attached to being a teen mother, juggling care for the baby with schoolwork and a job, getting adequate health care and learning to be a good parent are also obstacles.

For instance, after school, Twanna holds down a job from 4 p.m. to 1 a.m., doing homework on breaks or after she gets home from work. Luckily, her mother helps with the baby. The long hours and hard work are worthwhile to her, because she dreams of being a social worker, but it takes a lot of determination to handle all of her responsibilities.

Second Chance addresses these problems in several ways. First, each girl is required to take a parenting class as part of the regular school day for as long as she stays in the program – until graduation, for most. The program also provides support services, including individual and group counseling, referral to medical services and to other social agencies, liaisons with other students and teachers if there are difficulties at school and home visits to help with family or other

problems that prevent the girls from doing their best at school. And the girls also receive vocational counseling and training, provided by funding from the federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program.

Joan Ross, a regular home economics teacher who teaches the parenting class, said she tries to teach the girls much more than just the how to's of taking care of a baby. "I try to spend a fair amount of time on goal setting and what they need to be aware of in meeting those goals," Ross said. "As for taking care of the baby, I try to get the girls to look at their whole life. I try to get them to see that 'You have a life, too, which you need to make worthwhile.'"

Being a new mother doesn't come naturally, according to Hansen, and while goal setting, decision making and independence are important skills tackled during the parenting class, the girls also appreciate learning what to expect and how to take care of their children.

Being a mother is not what most of these girls expected. "I never really was around children, and even when I was, I could ignore it more because I wasn't their mother," Jill said. "Even with infants you say, 'Oh, how cute,' and give them back to their mom. But when you're the mother, everybody else is saying, 'Oh, how cute,' and giving it back to you. It's different. It's every day, all day long."

Class teaches babies' needs

"Without this class, I probably would have taken elders' advice about my baby," Wanda said. "They said, 'Give that baby food. Start him on solid food now. He's ready to eat.' But in here we learned to wait until at least four to six months, and then wait a week between each food that you add."

Kris was expecting to have her baby in a few weeks. "I'm kind of nervous, but I know what to expect because of parenting class," she said. "It's scary, but I know. I'm not totally prepared, but I'm getting ready." Before joining Second Chance, Kris said she didn't even know it existed, and several of the other girls indicated that they didn't know there were others in the same situation.

That isolation is relieved by a weekly support group in which the girls share their feelings and frustrations about such things as discipline problems, hurtful comments from other students or teachers or feeling different from their peers.

"I don't think I'm any stronger or braver than other students, but just listening in my regular classes, I feel more mature," Jill said. "They're worrying about their boyfriends and where they're going to go on this date. I'm worried about things like, Am I going to get my electric bill paid? Am I going to be able to get my rent paid? How many diapers is it going to take this month to carry both of them over? Our problems are different."

Not the only one

Twanna said, "Some people think that because I had a baby at 13, I was oversexed, but that's not true. Something happened in my family and they wouldn't listen, so I just kept the baby.... When I came to high school, I thought I was the only one who had a baby. So I was in a little corner by myself. I didn't talk to anybody. Now I talk all the time. I guess you'd call me the class clown."

Hansen, who conducts the support group, said one goal is helping the girls decide to delay having more children until the proper time. "We try to help them have higher self-esteem, to feel better about themselves, set goals, plan for the future," she said.

"A lot of them do want to have another child at some point, but we're thinking in terms of how long it will be before graduation, and what about college? We talk about making choices that will enable them to reach their goals and figuring out where another child will fit into that, rather than just letting it happen to them – which is what happened the first time.

"Many of the girls just don't plan. They're in situations where everything just happens to them. Instead of choosing for themselves how they want things to be, everybody else around them just chooses for them. So we're trying to make them be more independent, self-sufficient, working toward a future where they can support themselves and their children and make a life for themselves."

Every girl is a success

Even after just the first year, Second Chance has had successes. One girl graduated from high school last year, and nine will graduate this year. "We think every girl here is a success just because she's here, but graduation is the bottom line," Hansen said. The program has attracted a lot of attention from other school systems, because, unlike most programs that work with teen parents, Second Chance is operated within the regular high school instead of in an alternative school setting.

"Here, we really believe the girls need to be in the mainstream of high school life. In the first place, if we were to put them in an alternative school, there's no way we could offer the range of classes we've got here. We have girls all the way from special education to college bound in our program, and here they can get whatever they need, go to any of our classes, from advanced placement math to special education math," Hansen said.

"They also don't want to be segregated. They feel different enough. They don't need to be put away, to feel 'I've done something wrong. They're punishing me. They're going to put me away where nobody can ever see me.' We want them to be proud of themselves and their accomplishments, and they need to learn to live in the real world, too. If we can help them do that here, maybe they can continue to do it when they get out of school."

While many systems have visited Dalton High, Hansen said that so far no other system has started a similar program, probably because the visitors lack one or more of the components Hansen said are crucial to Second Chance's success. She offers the following advice for systems interested in a similar program.

- Don't just jump into it. Do your homework. "We had several years of educating our community about teen parents and dropouts, and I think that's essential. We have shown the community that these girls and their children are our future. If they don't get an education and get out in the workforce as productive citizens, we'll be supporting them on welfare, and they won't be able to support us when we retire. And even if folks aren't in favor of working with pregnant teens, it's hard to find somebody who doesn't support trying to lower the dropout rate."

- Make sure your school board and superintendent are behind you 100 percent. "Many of our visitors have been teachers and lower administrators who thought this sounded like a wonderful idea, but they went back home and they didn't have the support of the superintendent or the school board. So there was nothing they could do."

Jill, who had dropped out, gotten married and had a baby by age 16, recently passed the GED.

- Educate the school staff about program goals and the importance of what you are trying to do. "The more people who support you, the better off you'll be. When the program was brand new, there were several incidents in which hurtful things were said to the girls either by faculty or other students about the fact that they had a baby. Our principal talked in staff meeting about the program and how he expected faculty to behave in relationships with the girls, and we've had to talk to some people individually to help them understand what the girls are going through. Most have been very supportive," Hansen said.

"For some people, it's hard to accept such a changing role for the school. The typical teacher has never had to deal with these kinds of things before. They've had to deal with that student in that class for that period of the day, and they've not had to worry about the girl who has a baby at home, who may have been up all night the night before and can't be at school because her child is sick. This is much more unstructured than they're used to being."

Examine school policies

- Examine how school policies might affect girls with children. "What do you do about detention? Well, in several cases there have been babies in detention hall.

"And we've had to work out several new policies. For instance, the girls have to be out of school to have their babies. What do we do while that's happening?

We worked it out so that we can keep them on the school roll, and I work as a liaison with their teachers. I take their schoolwork to them so that they can keep up with their classmates. Barring complications, they come back to school in two to three weeks, and they don't have to miss any credit. Before, when girls dropped out to have a baby, at the very least they lost a whole semester's credit, even if they really wanted to stay in school."

What will the future hold for Jill, Twanna, Wanda and Kris, and their children? No one can say for sure, but it looks a lot brighter thanks to the Second Chance program.

Since this interview, Kris has had her baby and returned to classes. Wanda plans to graduate this spring, and Twanna will finish up next year. She hopes to get an office job and save her money so that one day she can go to college to become a social worker. Jill has passed the General Education Development exam, gotten her high school equivalency diploma and plans to enter classes at Dalton College. She hopes to become a veterinary technician. ◆

Why be concerned about teenage pregnancy?

- Four out of five teenage pregnancies are unwanted.
- The pregnancy rate is increasing for younger adolescents, ages 10 to 14.
- Fifty-eight percent of teen mothers are unmarried.
- Babies born to teenage mothers are at increased medical risk for low birth weight, infant mortality, prematurity and physical and mental handicaps.
- Ninety-six percent of teen mothers choose to keep their babies rather than give them up for adoption.
- Four out of five teen mothers will never receive a high school diploma.
- Seventeen percent of teenage mothers will be pregnant again within one year, 30 percent within two years.
- The single-year cost to the public for adolescent pregnancy and childbearing in the U.S. were estimated at $16.65 billion in 1985.
- The anticipated lifetime salary of a teenage mother is half that of a mother who delays pregnancy. According to statistics from Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the poorest people in America are children living in the homes of teenage mothers.

(Statistics compiled by Dalton High School Second Chance program.)

Parent Education

Helping parents prepare their children for school

By Kristin L. Summerlin

When Fran Buchanan had her first child four years ago, she soon realized that being a parent doesn't necessarily come naturally. "Unfortunately," she said, "babies are born without directions." She did the best she could with Gerren and his two-year-old brother, Jordan, but always felt she needed more help with parenting.

Thanks to an innovative new program at Carrollton City Kindergarten, Buchanan and other struggling parents are getting the help they need to prepare their two, three and four year olds for school.

"I always felt I needed help in being more involved with my kids – how to listen to them and get them to listen to me, how to communicate without hollering," Buchanan said. "Being involved in this program and hearing that others have the same problems has helped. Now I'm teaching them more about things like counting and colors. I've learned to say, 'Hand me the red book,' not just 'Hand me the book.' They're learning, and, in a roundabout way, getting more involved with them has kept them calmer, too."

Targets parents

Begun in October, the Preschool Parent Partners program is targeted toward parents who meet any one of several criteria that might put their children at risk of not doing well when they get to school: parents who did not complete high school, low-income parents, single parents or those who were teenagers when the first child was born.

The project, funded by a three-year, $40,000 innovation grant from the Georgia Department of Education, combines three elements to create a partnership between the school and the parents: school-based sessions on specific parenting skills, home visits and a toy lending library.

Teachers visit homes

First, the 24 participating parents are drawn into the school for a two-hour presentation on a particular topic (such as discipline, developing language skills or the influence of television), during which they discuss problems they're having and learn simple, everyday, inexpensive techniques to apply at home. The following month, teachers visit the parents at home to get feedback on what they're doing, to observe them working with their children and to offer suggestions and answer questions. In addition, parents take home books, records, games and other toys from the lending library, which includes educational toys that might be too expensive for many parents to buy. The toys are carefully chosen to nurture the skills children should be developing before entering school.

While it is widely recognized that parents are a child's first and most important teachers, many people assume that parents intuitively know how and what to teach their children – and that many just don't care enough to do so. Kathy Young, principal at City Kindergarten and the project's initiator, accepts neither of those assumptions.

"I know that most parents love their children and truly want the best for them," she said. "Many parents simply don't know what that is and don't know who to ask – or are too afraid to ask."

Young decided to develop Preschool Parent Partners and apply for the innovation grant after working with Carrollton's program for at-risk four year olds, which includes a mandatory parent component, and with First Steps, a program sponsored by a local hospital to teach new parents things they can do with their children and where to go for help.

"From that work, and from my work here at the kindergarten, I realized there was a huge need for some kind of parenting program," Young said. "So many children come to kindergarten who aren't ready. They're so far behind, when with just a little bit of encouragement at home they could have done a lot more than they're doing in school."

To be ready for school, children should be able to do such things as communicate and listen, recognize colors and shapes, know how to count and what the numbers mean, and be able to tie shoes, button buttons and go to the bathroom unassisted. Young estimates that at least 10 percent of the children who come to kindergarten don't have these skills. She wants to reach the parents of that group.

"We can tell when children come to kindergarten the ones who are prepared and the ones who aren't. For instance, you can tell if children have listened to their parents read a book at home. The attention span is there; they'll sit and listen to you read a story," she said. "And then there are the children who have never heard a story. They fidget and move. They have to develop listening skills. And listening skills, as any teacher will tell you, are very important."

Since joining the Preschool Parent Partners program Fran Buchannan says she feels much more comfortable working with four-year-old Gerren.

While the children are easily identified once they get to school, Young wanted to help them before they get there. And although it wasn't hard to identify the parents who needed help, at first it was difficult to get them to participate. Some parents, particularly those who hadn't finished school, didn't trust the school system. Some didn't have transportation. Others found it hard to attend a two-hour program after putting in a full day of work.

Developing trust

Young contacted every parent with children already in kindergarten and worked with local churches and civic groups to identify other parents who might fit into the project criteria. "Getting to the parents who need the help and getting them here is the hard part of the program, because it takes personal contact to develop trust," she said. "The flyers we sent out don't mean anything to them. We have to explain what we're going to do: 'This is how we can help you. This is how you can help your child. Don't you want to come and try it?'"

To make it easier for parents to attend, Young has arranged transportation for those who need it. The program pays for babysitting with structured activities, so parents can bring their children with them to the school. She also built an additional incentive into the program: a stipend for the parents. Those who attend all five sessions will receive $75 at the end of the program; those who come to four will receive $50, and those who attend three get $25.

Preschool Parent Partners is staffed by three veteran teachers, who can share their many years of experience handling small children. They are regular kindergarten teachers and receive extended day pay for their services.

Linda Bohannon, a 17-year veteran, said her goal is to show the parents that "they are the most important link in the education process. They create the atmosphere for success. Most parents seem to think that the teachers are in charge of all the learning, when actually the majority of learning takes place at home." She said she's trying to show parents a way to help prepare their children for school without a lot of expense and frustration.

Jan Dixon, an 18-year veteran, said, "We've seen so many children come to school ill-prepared. We always felt that if we could spend an hour or so a day getting them ready, they'd have a better self-concept when they come to school. They would be ready to learn. With this program, the parents help us do that. We hope after this the parents will feel better about us, we'll feel better about them, and it will just be a more positive atmosphere."

At the first school session, the teachers used a checklist to determine which skills the parents were having the most trouble with. The topic that came up most often was discipline. "They seem very concerned about discipline," said Dixon. "Many parents have a punitive attitude about discipline, and we're trying to redirect that into other ways to get a child to manage his own behavior besides physical punishment. We suggest talking with the child, taking away a favorite toy. We also talk about rewarding children when they're being good, so that they don't get attention just for bad behavior."

An important part of the school session is group discussion: The parents also learn from each other. Emily-Victoria Monge, mother of three-year-old Grant and two-month-old Mason, was relieved to learn she wasn't the only one having problems.

"I learned that a lot of Grant's behavior is normal. Three year olds throw fits," she said. "Before I talked to the other parents, it

seemed like everyone else's child was an angel. Now I know I'm not crazy when I can't take it anymore, and I've learned other ways to handle it. I've found that rolling my eyes at him can be very effective."

Dixon said many parents were relieved to find out that they hadn't been doing everything totally wrong, or that many of their children's behaviors are normal.

"One mother said she'd been reluctant to let her child have Playdough, because she was afraid he'd make a mess. When we told her it was important to develop motor skills and that it would help him hold a pencil later, she went right out and bought some. That's encouraging to us, that the parents listen," she said. "A lot of children had never been given an opportunity to hold a pencil or scissors. In a sense, we're giving the parents permission to do the things they might otherwise be afraid to do to get their children ready."

After the school sessions, the teachers give each parent a packet of suggested activities to take home and do with their children. The packet might include finger plays and poems, or suggestions on how to use a trip to the grocery store or the doctor's office as a learning experience. At one session the parents made puppets to take home and the teachers showed them how to use the puppets to develop language skills.

The teachers emphasize activities that don't cost any money or take a lot of time, such as spilling beans and picking them up, counting, letting the child help set the table and put all the forks, knives and spoons back in the drawer (which teaches them to recognize sets). "A lot of us remember making cookies with our mothers," Dixon said. "A lot of these children have never had a person go into the kitchen and start measuring or pouring and mixing and talking about different things with them. Sometimes parents think it's just easier for them to do things themselves. They don't recognize how important such little things can be."

Although pros at working with young children, the teachers say it takes special skills to work with parents.

Bohannon said, "I've learned to be a listener, to give them an opportunity to talk. Many of them have spent the entire day just with the child and don't have an opportunity to talk to adults in an adult situation, just one-on-one conversation about that special person, the child." Many times Bohannon said she finds herself sitting on the floor with the parents, getting comfortable, saying "Tell me the things that are bothering you."

We're here to teach children. Do we also have to teach parents? The answer is yes.
– Kathy Young

Dixon feels the main benefit is in bridging the gap between school and home. "The parents have delightfully surprised me, that they're interested enough and really care about their children," she said. "Many of them had bad school experiences and didn't feel good about teachers. They'd been burned too many times. We're trying to erase that gap and show them we're on the same team: The child is what we're working for."

Preschool Parent Partners includes several evaluation components, including pre- and post-tests to determine changes in parental attitudes and the development levels of the children. And, of course, Young expects the number of kindergartners retained to drop significantly.

Even before formal evaluations can be completed, the program's success is obvious. Victoria Monge said her son loves coming to "big boy school," and she looks forward to it herself. Linda Buchanan seems very comfortable working with her two small sons. And the children obviously have blossomed: They seem eager to learn, they know their numbers and colors, they ask and answer questions readily.

Young believes more and more schools will find that they have to take up parent education in the future. "A lot of people ask, 'Where does it end? I'm here to teach the child; does that mean I also have to teach the parents?' Yes, you do," she said. "You may not want to, but you really have to if you want to have an effect on the child. By helping the parents, we help the children. And that's what we're here for." ◆

Emily-Victoria Monge was relieved to know Grant's behavior is normal. "Three year olds throw fits."

Environmental Education

Expanding the classroom to encompass the world

By Wagers Chenault

Acid rain. Deterioration of the ozone layer. Destruction of the rain forests. And those are just the biggies.

There's also asbestos containment; insecticide scares at the grocery; syringes and oil spills at the beach.

If you want clean water, you have to buy it in a bottle. If you want clean air, you have to move to – where?

These are not natural catastrophies. They were all caused by us, the people of the 20th Century. The people of the 21st Century – our children – will have to clean up the mess we leave behind. Will they have the inclination and the will to do it? And will they have the problem solving skills necessary to fix the environment without breaking the economy?

Will they even care?

Through students' eyes

"If we cut down all our trees, that would be bad because the trees give off oxygen," said Willis Davenport, a sixth-grade student at Huntley Hills Elementary School in DeKalb County. "Down in South America they cut down areas of trees as big as Rhode Island every day, and that cuts our oxygen supply down."

Melissa Arundelli, a seventh grader at Huntley Hills, is concerned about the food chain. "Because if one animal dies, then other animals die, and when all the other animals die, then we're going to die too."

From an hour's talk with Melissa, Willis and schoolmates Brandon Young and Holly Schilling, it's obvious that our young people do care about the environment. Time after time they referred to news and nature shows they had seen on television. Parents and teachers also had a significant impact.

The students mentioned reading about the environment in books and even occasionally discussing the issues with their friends. "It comes up every now and then," said Willis. "Like, what would happen if you didn't have enough water."

Most young people probably get their information about the environment the same way these four students do – with one exception. Last fall, the sixth- and seventh-grade students at Huntley Hills had a special experience. They participated in the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service Environmental Education Program.

"Our purpose is to provide an educational service to Georgia schools by expanding the walls of the traditional classroom," said program director Diane Davies. "We use the out-of-doors as a dynamic living laboratory for study.

The Environmental Education Program, recognized as one of the best in the nation, operates at four sites, all 4-H Club facilities, around the state: Rock Eagle, near Madison; Jekyll Island, near Brunswick; Tybee Island, near Savannah; and Wahsega, near Dahlonega.

The basic instructional approach is the same at all four centers, but specific classes are tailored to take advantage of the natural surroundings and cultural history unique to each site. The students from Huntley Hills visited two of the centers. When the sixth graders went to Rock Eagle, they studied pond ecology and explored ancient Native American sites. When the seventh graders went to Jekyll, they attended a class in beach ecology and toured Millionaire's Village.

The program, which began in 1979, is designed to serve students in grades three through eight, although high school groups occasionally participate. Classes of students, often whole grade levels, leave their schools and travel to one of the sites, where they are housed, fed and taught for three to five days. The students are accompanied by their teachers, who share instructional duties with the Extension Service's specially trained staff. Parent volunteers also come along to chaperone and share in the experience.

It's fun, of course. It's also school. "Students are here to learn," said Davies, who is headquartered at Rock Eagle, the largest 4-H center in the world and flagship of the Environmental Education Program. "They are on academic task eight to 10 hours a day. Our program of study meets or exceeds all state curriculum standards. (Indeed, Davies helped write QCC objectives for grades K-8.) We cooperate very closely with the Georgia Department of Education on that.

"Our program is interdisciplinary. For language arts, we require students to keep a journal and complete creative writing as-

signments. We teach math in many ways, from map making to using a compass to taking accurate scientific measurements. Social studies is covered by exploring the cultures of native Americans, early pioneers and other people unique to each site. Students participate in art classes and produce dramatic skits. And, of course, the natural setting is ideal for studying science. We even conduct astronomy classes at night."

Naturally, this program is immensely popular. In the past 10 years 500 schools have been served – and many of those have participated more than once. Last year alone 25,000 students visited one or another of the four sites. Most come from Georgia, but six other Southeastern states also send classes. There is a per-child fee to cover the costs of food and lodging.

Many schools conduct fund-raising activities to ensure that every student in a grade level can participate, and the Georgia Department of Education provides funding to help low-income students at risk attend.

The Environmental Education Program takes students outside the traditional classroom. They have fun – but they also learn. The interdisciplinary program keeps them on task eight to 10 hours a day.

Hands-on learning

"We owe our success to advertising – the word-of-mouth variety," said Davies. "Teachers want an exciting learning experience for their students, so they come here. Then they tell their colleagues in other schools. Teachers know that different students learn in different ways. Many will never be turned on by a lecture or a textbook. But all students seem to respond to the hands-on, experiential learning methods featured here."

Kelley Kalinich, lead teacher for student services at Huntley Hills, agrees. "I think the experiences they are able to provide the students cannot be reproduced here at school," she said. Kalinich has taken students to Rock Eagle and Jekyll Island for three years. She hopes to add Wahsega and the Tybee Island center to the list soon. "It's a hands-on experience that really helps them learn through the actual work that they do."

"Hands-on" is a phrase that keeps popping up. What does it mean? In the pond ecology class at Rock Eagle, students don't just visit a pond. They get right down in it, "feeling the gunk and smelling the rot," according to Davies.

Sixth-grader Holly Schilling remembers the scientific studies. "We got these little containers, and we scooped up algae in the pond. Some of us got minnows and leeches, and we studied them in a microscope."

Willis remembers the environmental lesson. "The first thing we did when we got there, we learned about pond ecology and the water cycle. Then we played a game. We divided up into even teams. Some people were dragonflies, some people were minnows, and some people were these things that you could hardly see, like plankton. The minnows would try to get the plankton, and the dragonflies would try to get the minnows, and by the time we finished playing, it was mainly the dragonflies that were left. It was to teach us how the environment is, like if you took plankton out, then the minnows would die off, then the dragonflies would die off because they would not have anything to eat."

The pond ecology class illustrates that a major focus of the Environmental Education Program is environmental awareness. "That's very important to us," said Diane Davies. "We talk about pollution and endangered species – young people are very concerned about endangered species. But we talk about those things not in isolation but in terms of how they affect the rest of nature, including human society. We talk about how natural systems are interrelated, how they work together. In a natural system there is no waste; everything is recycled, everything is used. That, to me, is the soul of true environmentalism. The natural system provides a real model for human beings. That's what we try to get across to these students."

Life as a dragonfly

Being a dragonfly for a while had an effect on Willis. "It disturbed me a lot, because some animals like birds depend on dragonflies for food, and we depend on some birds for food, and if we kill what the birds eat, then one source of our food would die off. And that might not affect us right now, because we have other sources of food, but it would affect the birds, and eventually it would affect us," he said.

Eventually, what we do to the environment always comes back to affect us. Brandon Young got that message, and he sees it hitting close to home. His seventh-grade class studied beach ecology at Jekyll Island. "When I first went to Jekyll Island, I'd never heard of a sand dune," he said. "I'd seen them, but I didn't know what they were. In New York, where I used to live, people step on them and kill them, and nobody really knows what they're doing to the sand dunes. The dunes help the other animals that come up from the ocean to live.

"They explained to us how the sand dunes were made, and if you step on them it squeezes down the plants and kills them. When the plants die they can't hold the dunes together anymore, so the dunes die too. We also learned about the salt marshes and how they're called the nurseries of the sea for shrimp and other creatures. If we destroy the marshes, or pollute them, the shrimp will die. Then we won't have places like Red Lobster."

Students keep journals and do creative writing assignments.

Talking with the Huntley Hills students, it was apparent that the Environmental Education Program was doing a good job of making young people more aware of the interrelatedness of the environment. Said Brandon, "I thought it was going to be boring when we first went to Jekyll Island, and it turned out to be nice. I liked it better than being in class, and it gave me a better look at my environment and how to protect it."

Schools can do more

Most public school students in Georgia will not be able to participate in the Environmental Education Program. Most will not be able to take advantage of other excellent programs offered at facilities operated by some of Georgia's local school systems, such as Fernbank Science Center in DeKalb County or Oatland Island Education Center in Chatham County. Most of our students will receive their environmental education from their regular teachers in their regular classrooms. Will that be enough? Kalinich believes the schools can do more. "I think it's extremely important for environmental awareness to be taught in the schools, and I think there's been a real void in that area for a long time," she said.

As lead teacher for student services, Kalinich frequently counsels students. "One of the things I try to do is help them become aware of the world around them. You're not just here in the classroom; you're not just here in the school or in the community. As a human being you also affect the rest of the world, and the environment is a part of that.

"But I see children now not even aware that they are part of the environment. They feel that, there's the environment – and here's us. They don't understand that they're part of it all, and that awareness is so important. They're the ones who are going to have to live in this world, and they need to know how to take care of it."

Kalinich's concerns about the importance of environmental education are shared by many, including State School Superintendent Werner Rogers. "Our society has done a lousy job of protecting the environment. And as we continue to abuse an ecosystem that becomes more fragile every year – the potential for disaster is great. Our young people must be taught that their future is tied up with the environment's future. The public schools have a major role to play in that educational effort. We kept that obligation in mind when we wrote the QCC."

"Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum will be a boon to environmental education in this state," said Kathleen Varnell, science coordinator for the Georgia Department of Education. "QCC identifies specific environmental objectives to be taught to Georgia public school students in all science programs, kindergarten through 12th grade."

Those objectives are referred to as ESTS (Environment, Science, Technology and Society) in kindergarten through eighth grade and as STS in high school courses. Students who study biology or physics or earth science also study how practice in these fields can affect the environment.

Varnell noted that unlike some states, Georgia does not separate environmental studies from the rest of the curriculum.

"We believe the best approach is to infuse environmental objectives into every science course," she said. "We don't want students to take Environmental Protection 101 in the ninth grade and then put it away and forget about it. The subject is too basic, too important for that. Environmental concerns should be an integral part of any study of science. I hope one day STS objectives will be infused across the curriculum. In fact, that's already the case in some social studies programs."

QCC objectives

Among the 15 approved science courses in Georgia high schools, two can be identified as primarily environmental in nature: "The Ecology" and "Science, Technology and Society." These courses, however, are electives and are not offered in many of the state's school systems. The four courses that are offered in every system are chemistry, physics, biology and physical science. Scanning the QCC, Varnell pointed out some of the STS objectives in these basic science courses.

"For instance, in biology, which is taken by most high school students, I see that seven of the 44 objectives are clearly aimed at environmental concerns. Here's a whole unit on ecological relationships."

Following are some of the QCC objectives for biology.

- Assess the impact of man's activities on certain ecological situations, such as acid rain, water pollution, air pollution, etc.
- Conduct controlled field or laboratory studies that illustrate the effects of certain pollutants.

• Explore ways to solve current ecological problems and to minimize problems in the future.

Staff development

Assess the impact. Conduct studies. Explore ways to solve. That's a pretty good summary of how the QCC approaches environmental education. Varnell has been involved in staff development activities across the state to help teachers understand the QCC approach.

Kalinich believes that teacher preparation is very important. "I feel it should be a part of the teacher certification requirements. In many cases the teachers themselves are not informed, and they don't feel that connection with the environment, and so they're not passing that on to their students. I don't mean teachers should have to take a college course on the environment, but it should be required through staff development."

Kathleen Varnell agrees that the individual teacher has a lot to do with effective environmental education. "There are many excellent teachers in Georgia who are also environmental activists, and they surely bring that personal dimension to the classroom. At the same time, there are probably some teachers who are not that concerned, and that's reflected too.

"Actually, that's one reason why I'm so excited about the QCC. For the first time every course has clearly defined objectives that must be met by every public school in Georgia. The enthusiastic teachers can continue to deliver more than the state requires, but no teacher can deliver less.

"I believe that once QCC is securely in place and our teachers have received the appropriate staff development, you will begin to see a significant increase in the overall level of environmental awareness among Georgia public school students."

Business and industry are also involved in environmental education. The Kellogg Foundation cosponsors "The Global Food Web," a public policy forum focusing on food and nutrition, world hunger, food production and the global environment, and how those four areas are related. The forum is administered through the 4-H Department of the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service and receives support from the Georgia Department of Education and other state and federal agencies. Diane Davies is project coordinator, and Kathleen Varnell is on the management team.

Learning truly is "hands-on." Students get right down in whatever environment they're studying and smell the smells, feel the mud. They come away with a more concrete – and lasting – impression.

Studying global problems

Every county in the state will be invited to send a team – one adult leader and four students – to participate in the forum. The teams will study how the three areas under discussion affect global problems and how individuals can contribute to solutions.

The forum emphasizes problem solving. When it's all over, the teams will return to their communities and share what they've learned with school and civic groups.

Rogers and Varnell agree that Georgia public schools are doing a great deal to educate students about the environment. Through the state's QCC, through projects like the one sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, through unique educational opportunities like the Environmental Education Program, Georgia students are getting the message.

The first Earth Day was in 1970. The Seventies were supposed to be the Decade of the Environment – remember? What we thought was a new movement turned out to be, for too many people, a new fad. A successful environmental movement must be a sustained effort. And sustained efforts are not supported by slogans and campaign rhetoric. Americans will not deal effectively with this issue until there is a basic and widespread appreciation of the environment and what it means to human existence.

Will the people of the the next century have the inclination and the will to clean up our mess? It's far too early to say. But, as always, our best hope is the education of our children.

As Davies said, "Through gaining an appreciation of natural systems now, perhaps later, when these students become scientists and business leaders and politicians, maybe they will make wise environmental choices based on the things they learned here."

Or, as Willis Davenport said, "I just feel bad. We should do more about the environment, not just sit around and watch it die."◆

Georgia schools go beyond 'just say no'

By Judy Whidby Hall

An innocent-eyed eight year old with $56 in drug profits in his pocket is arrested for selling crack. A 12 year old's hostile outburst in the classroom lands her in a treatment center for alcoholism. A teenager, barely more than a child herself, gives birth to a tiny, trembling, cocaine-addicted baby.

The eight-year-old crack dealer, the 12-year-old alcoholic and the addicted teen and her addicted baby are our children, the children and youth of our communities. And they are the students in our schools. Only recently, Americans perceived a lack of discipline as the greatest problem facing schools. Since 1986, however, that perception has been replaced by concern over drug use, a concern that has edged higher each year. A 1989 Gallop poll showed 34 percent of Americans now believe drug abuse is the greatest problem facing schools.

This conclusion by so many Americans is not unexpected – nor is it unfounded. Data collected by the National Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE), an Atlanta-based nonprofit community action organization, shows that in 1960 fewer than one percent of teenagers had ever tried marijuana or any illicit drug. By 1980 more than 60 percent had experimented with drugs. As drug use pervaded mainstream America, the average age of first use dropped from 19 to 12. Pot-smoking became a rite of passage into teenage social life. "Partying" meant getting high on drugs and alcohol, and more than 40 percent of teens became social or regular users.

Then as public awareness of the health hazards of marijuana and its role as a gateway to harder drug use grew, use began to decline. By 1985, although 61 percent of high school seniors admitted trying an illicit drug (54 of the 61 percent admitted trying marijuana), daily marijuana use had dropped to five percent. Despite the decline, U.S. figures for illicit drug use are still the highest in the developed world.

Increasing risks

If indeed more youngsters are saying no to drugs, those who say yes to experimentation are increasingly at risk because of the great flood of high-potency marijuana, cocaine, more affordable crack cocaine and "designer" drugs into the United States.

If our eight year olds and 12 year olds and teens are to resist becoming pushers or users or, worse yet, users who haplessly extend chemical addiction into the next generation, then we must teach them the harmfulness of this involvement, for no one – no student, no family, no community – is immune to its attendant devastation.

Schools in Georgia and every state in our nation are giving focus to the drug abuse problem, a problem that, to be solved, must be a responsibility shared by parents and the communities they live in.

Most Georgia schools can trace the beginnings of their drug education and pre-

vention programs to early in the 1980s, when the concerns of parents, teachers and school administrators began to solidify.

During this time community action groups such as PRIDE and the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth, along with such student groups as Just Say No clubs and SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving), came into being or gained new prominence. In 1985 Georgia's education reform law, the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE), provided a framework for drug education at all grade levels under the requirements for health and physical education.

QBE also required that high school students participate in the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program, a four-hour course jointly established by the department of education and the Georgia Department of Public Safety to alert students to the hazards of using alcohol or drugs and driving.

Concern gained further strength when Congress passed the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act in 1986. This law provides money to help schools offer students the environment, instruction and help that encourage and enable them to resist drug use. Through this act Georgia received $2.5 million for the 1987-88 school year, the first year of the program. Funding has increased each year, reaching $5.2 million in 1989-90. More than $9 million is expected next year for Georgia.

Guidelines for the Drug-Free Schools and Communities program require that school systems have a clear no-use policy and enforcement procedure, drug education instruction in kindergarten through 12th grade, student assistance and intervention programs and a Drug-Free Schools Advisory Committee with parent and community involvement. All Georgia school systems are participating in the program, either directly or collectively through their Regional Educational Service Agencies.

Instruction, student assistance and intervention programs and student and community involvement are the fundamental elements of drug education programs in Georgia schools, according to Rendel Stalvey, health education coordinator for the Georgia Department of Education.

"To help schools implement drug education programs, the department of education is developing health education resource guides that include drug education objectives," Stalvey said. "We have completed the guides for grades two through seven, and we expect to complete guides for the remaining grades during 1990."

Most common curricula

Stalvey said that while Georgia schools currently use a number of different drug education curricula, the three most frequently used are *Discover: Skills for Life*, a textbook series for kindergarten through ninth grade; the Mendez curriculum: *Meology* for kindergarten through sixth grade and *Clear Choices* for grades seven through nine; and *Quest: Skills for Adolescents*, developed by Lions Clubs International and the National Quest Center, a nonprofit education organization.

"These curricula are all similar in that they not only provide information about drugs, but they also help students strengthen self-esteem and coping skills and improve their decision-making and relationship abilities," Stalvey said.

Since the inception of QBE requirements and the Drug-Free Schools program, more than 10,000 Georgia teachers have participated in drug education in-service training for an average of 22 hours each. While drug education instruction, the first order of drug abuse prevention, has established a solid footing, student assistance and intervention programs are not as fully available for every student, according to Stalvey.

"There are a good number of strong student assistance programs functioning in both rural and metropolitan systems, but many schools lack the counselors they need to help students who need help or to intervene when a crisis arises," he said. "Those students who are most vulnerable to drug use usually have a variety of needs, and responding to them requires the specialized knowledge and training counselors can offer."

The urgent need to help vulnerable students was the driving force that allowed school crisis intervention counselors Michael Carpenter and Liz Jones to establish Cobb County's Prevention/Intervention Center in 1987.

"The Prevention/Intervention Center's focus is on at-risk or high-risk students and their self-destructive behaviors," Carpenter said. "Our objective is to identify these students and intervene with their families to get them the help they need."

"The way we handle intervention in Cobb County is unique in that we don't include the child in the intervening, but go straight to the parent," he said. "We are trying to push parents to get an evaluation done. The issues surrounding a referral are very high-risk: The student may be involved in chemical use, abused, depressed or suicidal."

Carpenter said the center's staff makes an assessment and offers the family services ranging from education to free evaluations provided by a coalition of 13 treatment hospitals and five private therapists who work with the center. The center provides case management (charting treatment and progress) and follow-up services, including support groups for students and families.

All faculty trained

Carpenter and Jones have conducted training on the nature of chemical use and dependency and how to identify at-risk students for the faculty and staff of all 75 of Cobb County's schools. While each school has a core intervention team of teachers and other school staff, Carpenter said they have worked to develop a referral network that includes parents, the courts, the county mental health department, the county department of family and children's services, clergy and physicians.

"As awareness of how to identify students at risk has increased, our referrals have doubled. We are now averaging more than 100 a month," he said.

Carpenter said the program defines a student at risk as one who is under the age of 21, is involved with chemical use and exhibits one or more of the following characteristics.

He or she

- is a child of a chemically dependent person.

- is truant and a potential school dropout.
- is sexually active.
- is from a dysfunctional family.
- is a victim of physical, sexual or psychological abuse.
- has committed violent or delinquent acts.
- has attempted suicide.
- has had long-term physical pain.
- has been a runaway.
- has an eating disorder.
- has been retained in a grade or administratively placed.
- speaks English as a second language.
- is involved with the occult.
- is in special education or working with a Student Support Team. (A Student Support Team is made up of teachers and operates in every Cobb County school to help students who are having academic or behavior problems. Parental assistance is an essential part of the team.)

Forty of every 100 referrals to the center are high school students, and 80 of every 100 referrals have a family history of chemical dependency, according to Carpenter. Here are some examples of referrals.

- A depressed kindergartner, whose father is alcoholic, who wants to die
- A second grader who brought vodka and orange juice in a thermos to school
- A sixth grader showing bizarre behavior at school found to be using cocaine and marijuana he got from his stepfather
- Eight classmates hospitalized for depression after a fellow eighth grader overdosed by inhaling WD40 and ammonia
- A 10th-grade girl whose weight dropped to 74 pounds, who cut herself with a razor blade while intoxicated, is depressed and tried to kill herself while driving a car

To make sure students and parents get help within 24 hours, Carpenter and Jones are part of a coalition of representatives from treatment hospitals, private therapists, mental health agencies and the juvenile court. The coalition meets monthly to exchange information and avoid duplication of services. Carpenter said coalition members must offer free assessments and be committed to providing service to the community. Free beds for indigent families and costs adjusted to incomes are a by-product of this involvement with Cobb schools.

Cobb County's drug use policy also focuses on treatment. Students who violate the system's policy prohibiting the use, possession or sale of drugs on campus or at school-sponsored activities can reduce their suspension by attending four two-hour sessions of Substance Use Prevention and Education Resource (SUPER), a course that includes factual information on substance use, legal and medical consequences, effective listening and communicating skills and substance use self-assessment. The course is provided by the Metropolitan Atlanta Council on Alcohol and Drugs (MACAD), and a parent, guardian or relative must attend with the student. Second-time offenders attend a second session of the program and undergo diagnostic assessment for chemical dependency.

If Cobb County offers a model student assistance program for large, metropolitan school systems, then Franklin County is surely its counterpart for small, rural systems. The scale and structure of Franklin County's program is necessarily more constrained than a system close to many community resources, but that constraint doesn't mean helping students is impossible. Helen Brown, coordinater of Franklin County's drug education program, explained it this way.

Three points

"Education, intervention and community involvement constitute the three points of our drug education and prevention program. We decided to use the Mendez curriculum because it not only gives students facts about drugs and drug abuse, but it helps them understand that they make decisions about the things they do and that they can learn to make good decisions," Brown said.

"This is the first year of our student assistance program, and it has become a vital part of our overall drug education program. We have no counselors in our elementary schools, so we used money from the Drug-Free Schools Program to arrange to have a qualified intervention counselor from the Athens Family Counseling Service serve our students three days a week."

"We would like to have the counselor full time," Brown said. "With the group counseling she does in the elementary schools and counseling with parents and students after working hours, the program has already grown beyond what one person can do in three days. What we really need are counselors for our elementary schools."

Franklin County also uses the SUPER program. Ten people (five counselors, two police officers, one health teacher, one school staff member and one school board member) have been trained as a core team to teach it. Brown says she has had parents who have been involved in SUPER with their child tell her that they think it is information every parent should have.

Parenting classes

The student assistance counselor has also helped with Franklin County's community involvement program by conducting parenting classes, this year on assertive discipline. Brown said each year the system offers a series of three parenting classes in the three areas – Carnesville, Lavonia and Royston – where the elementary schools are located.

"We send invitations to some parents who may especially benefit from the classes," she said. "But of course the classes are open to all parents, and we encourage all who will to attend. Our emphasis has been on involving our parents because many of our families cannot afford to pay for the limited counseling resources that are available in our area."

It's not incidental that the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program requires parent involvement. The strongest supporters of a school's drug-free policy are parents concerned about their children becoming involved with drugs.

PRIDE's *Parent to Parent* and the Mendez *Choices and Challenges* are the two most frequently used drug education parenting programs in Georgia school systems and RESAs. Both programs are offered in four two-hour sessions, and both remind parents of the reasons adolescents get in-

volved with drugs and alcohol (especially peer pressure and availability) and offer ways to steer them around it.

"Since early 1989 we have trained more than 50 *Parent to Parent* program facilitators," said Deborah McLendon, coordinator of Programs for High-Risk Youth for the Southwest Georgia RESA. "And these facilitators have, in turn, conducted workshops for more than 500 parents throughout our area."

McLendon said the RESA has implemented its drug prevention program in stages, beginning in 1987. "We concentrated first on getting our drug education curriculum off the ground," she said. "We chose to use the Mendez curriculum. We have trained all our health teachers in how to use it."

While school systems were getting the curriculum in place, they were also working on involving students and building an attitude of positive peer pressure. McLendon said Southwest RESA arranged for America's PRIDE teams to conduct workshops for middle and high school students.

An idea developed by PRIDE, America's PRIDE teams are high school and college students who stage daylong workshops using singing, dancing, skits and rap sessions to discourage drug use. According to PRIDE representatives, the underlying concept of the workshops is friendship. In the rap sessions team leaders talk with students about what drugs do to the body, about resisting peer pressure, communicating with parents and how students can help a friend or relative involved with drugs. At the end of the day, team leaders and students together give a 45-minute performance of the songs, dances and skits they have learned for other students, parents and the community.

Billboard blitz

Southwest RESA school systems have reached out to their communities with an idea borrowed from the First District RESA for an anti-drug billboard blitz using student art. Elementary and middle school art was selected from each system and, with the help of local advertising agencies, turned into billboard displays. Because one system has no billboards, winning art was shown on local television accompanied by a message recorded by the student.

The goal now is to help schools develop student assistance programs. "We have contacted area treatment centers and hospitals, and they have agreed to help," McLendon said. Eleven in the 15-county area have said yes.

Newton County High School is an example of how a school can turn things around. There was a time when drug use at the school occurred frequently.

That's changed, and Charles Kelly, the school's full-time counseling psychologist, attributes a great part of the change to the schools strict, zero-tolerance drug policy, which has reduced violations to fewer than one percent. The state average is three percent.

In 1989 the U.S. Department of Education named Newton County High School as Georgia's winner of the national Drug-Free Schools Program. The school was one of only 30 that received national recognition. "Besides our zero-tolerance drug policy, we think Newton County won because of our curriculum, our student and community involvement and the counseling we offer our students," Kelly said.

All students take a health education course that includes a unit on alcohol and drug abuse. Representatives from law enforcement, physical and mental health organizations and anti-drug-abuse organizations are regular speakers for health classes and assemblies.

Kelly said the Newton County program has evolved since about 1981, when the school organized Teens Against Drugs (TAD), now with more than 60 active members. TAD has put on plays, skits and puppet shows for elementary and middle school students to promote the drug prevention message. The club cosponsors Drug Awareness Week, and, since its founding, more than 140 members have attended PRIDE's annual International Drug Conference in Atlanta. This conference each year draws approximately 6,000 students and 2,000 adults from Georgia, the nation and as many as 70 countries. Newton County can also claim credit for being the first Georgia high school to offer its students an America's PRIDE workshop.

In 1988 the school expanded the range of its counseling services by giving Kelly an extended day contract to work with students and their parents on drug-related and other high-risk concerns.

"Our program is unique in that, in addition to four counselors, a registrar and a financial aid advisor, I am on the staff full-time," Kelly said. "I currently have a case load of 165 students, whom I counsel on a regular basis. I work with students in groups or in individual therapy. And I work with students and their parents in the evening if they can't come during the day."

Knowing that for many young people the availability of alcohol and drugs and the pressure to use them are not forces easily resisted, Newton County's Parent/School Communication Network recently asked area merchants to reaffirm their responsibility for a drug-free community. Kelly said 76 merchants who sell alcohol signed contracts with the school/community team stating that they will not sell it to teens. So they can visibly endorse the drug prevention effort, merchants were given a decal to display in their stores and shops.

Alcohol also a major concern

Adolescent alcohol use certainly should not be less a concern than marijuana, cocaine, crack cocaine and the various stimulants and hallucinogens so readily available to young people. Adolescents who drink are two to three times more likely to become alcoholic than adults who drink. Alcoholism, which may take several years to manifest itself in adults, can progress to advanced stages in six to nine months in adolescents. And even more immediate is the fact that more teenagers die [illegible] alcohol-related driving accidents than from any other cause.

Twice, first in October 1987 and again in October 1989, statewide surveys of students in grades six through 12 have confirmed that alcohol is the drug adolescents use most often.

The 1987 survey was conducted in 93 percent of Georgia schools with more than

(Continued on page 29)

Homeless Students

Missing school is just one of many traumas

By Gale E. Samuels

For some of us, missing a week of school when we were six or seven was traumatic. How would we ever catch up and learn all the new things the teacher taught that week? For thousands of Georgia children, the trauma of missing school is just one of the scary results of not having a place to call home.

> In a homeless child's life, school may be the most stable element.

To understand the implications of homelessness on a child, consider this situation, which actually happened in Georgia.

A family – father, mother, two preschool children and two school-aged daughters – was left homeless after the father was injured and laid off from work. The loss of income that followed resulted in eviction from their rented house in a metro Atlanta neighborhood. The father was not eligible for worker's compensation or unemployment insurance.

When friends couldn't put them up, the family was able to locate shelter at an "emergency" hotel that is part of a partnership with a task force on the homeless. The children continued at school since the hotel was nearby. The hotel stay, normally limited to one or two nights, was extended to a week while the parents looked for space in a family shelter. When none was available, the mother and children had to stay at one shelter, while the father went to a shelter for single men. Both shelters were located too far from the original school to get transportation there and back.

The priority at this time was to get the family settled again in a stable living environment, which seemed just days away. Again, the women's shelter extended the emergency stay until the family could locate space in a family shelter. About two weeks later, the whole family finally found shelter space in a different county.

Problems with enrollment

When told they could stay there while they saved enough to get back on their feet (the father had found work again), the mother went to enroll the children in the new school system. She was told that the children had to withdraw officially from the former school system and that she would have to obtain their health and school records for them to enroll. An advocate at the shelter contacted the Georgia Department of Education and was told to ask the new school system to request the records from the former system by phone and to enroll the children based on the mother's information. The advocate returned to the new school with the mother to make these requests, and the children were enrolled.

In all, the children missed about three and a half weeks of school. But the toll this took is not just a matter of making up missed school work. Being without a home base can have many negative implications for children. The emotional traumas of the family being split up, of not knowing where they would sleep from one day to the next and being away from friends are intense.

Moving to another county and walking into a totally different school environment as a child living at a shelter are also upsetting situations with effects that will last much longer than three and a half weeks. The children must adjust to a new place in the curriculum and new peers until they get back to their old neighborhood and school. And even when they do return, they are faced with explaining their absence to friends and schoolmates. For children who lose their homes, these and other issues can cause trouble at school.

A typical situation

David Davidson, director of the Georgia Department of Education's Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, explains some general factors that contributed to the fairly typical situation faced by this family. First, the family expected to be back in housing and the original school within two to three days after eviction – at most a week. Problems arose when that didn't happen, and the long distance be-

tween the available shelter space and the school of origin was prohibitive.

With a lack of comprehensive services, the priorities of finding shelter, food, employment and family stability come before school. Finally, school-based obstacles, including ignorance of the rights and protections of homeless families, lack of awareness and sensitivity and school system procedures, can further contribute to the delay of getting children back in the classroom.

Anita Beaty, director of Atlanta's Task Force for the Homeless, thinks that simplifying access to education and services for homeless children is the answer.

"We are looking for immediate access. For example, by definition, a homeless child should qualify for free lunch as soon as he walks in the school door. We could eliminate the delay of paperwork through immediate qualification. Enrollment delays have caused such far-reaching problems as a mother losing custody of her child because the child had been out of school too long," Beaty said.

Schooling is only one of the problems of a homeless family. When parents are told they need records for enrollment, that might be too much to deal with when they are trying to get shelter and food.

As the problem of homelessness keeps growing, the public's perception of who homeless people are is coming closer to the truth, and legislators have begun tackling some of the issues confronting homeless families and children.

In 1987, the U.S. Congress realized that homeless children faced enormous problems in getting access to education. Legislators responded by passing the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which provides incentive grants to help each state coordinate efforts to locate homeless children and resolve issues of access and service. Until the law's enactment, it was left up to the states to find resources to coordinate and fund services.

Last year, to comply with the law, the Georgia Board of Education developed and adopted the State of Georgia Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. Davidson and Ellouise Collins, director of the Compensatory Education Division, coordinated the state's plan, which includes a comprehensive study by Georgia State University's Center for Urban Policy Research to find and count Georgia's homeless children.

According to Davidson, this is the only official count of the homeless done in the state. For the first time, we have a picture of how many Georgia children are affected by homelessness.

The resulting numbers in Figure 1 were much higher than expected. They are presented as low and high estimates because in some areas Department of Family and Children's Services offices did not report, advocates for the homeless persuaded local systems not to report to avoid labeling children as homeless or cultural attitudes created resistance to labeling people as being in need of public assistance.

The study also looked at barriers to education for homeless students (such as policies, codes and school regulations) which had to be changed to comply with the law.

In response to the findings and the law, the state board has altered several policies, adopted the state plan and given local education agencies the authority to make determinations about placing homeless children in the schools that serve the child's best interest. Other provisions adopted in the plan call for each homeless child to receive services comparable to other students and for each school system to maintain records on each homeless child so they are available in a timely manner to facilitate the child's transition to a new school curriculum as quickly as possible.

The state board has also required local school systems to adopt policies to allow resolution of any disputes about the provision of public education for homeless children. Initial drafts of these policies were

Figure 1
1988 estimates of homeless and migrant children by geographic regions

	North Georgia		Middle Georgia		South Georgia	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Homeless children	**1316**	**3865**	**2430**	**3156**	**2235**	**2477**
Preschool	447	1392	867	1145	1430	1531
Grade	523	1493	941	1211	486	572
Middle	221	631	401	515	208	244
High	125	349	221	285	111	130
Migrant children	**617**		**838**		**2761**	
Preschool	136		263		788	
School-age	481		575		1973	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Homeless & migrant children	**1933**	**1933**	**1933**	**1933**	**1933**	**1933**

due to Davidson for review on December 15, 1989. If disputes are not resolved locally, concerned parties may request further review from the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Board of Education.

There is still work to be done. In Beaty's opinion, a further interpretation of the federal law from the state level might help local systems with compliance. From the number of calls she receives about the issue, access to enrollment is not a given in some local systems.

Davidson's big job now is getting the word out about the law and informing homeless families of their right to access to an education for their children. The situation is not easy, for families or for schools. Teachers can play a big role in assessing the needs of homeless children, steering them toward programs they need most and helping them blend as well as possible into the school setting.

According to Davidson, teachers can help by being sensitive to the plight of homeless families and the needs homeless children bring to school. Teachers should try to be aware of children who may not be receiving sufficient nutrition or who fall asleep at their desks because they can't sleep in the shelter or on the streets. When the children get into assistance programs such as free lunch, teachers should be sensitive not to separate them from others in the cafeteria or draw attention to their situation.

Since school may be the homeless child's most stable environment, teachers should be sensitive to what children say in the classroom, keeping their disclosures confidential and protecting the child from ridicule. The teacher may be spending more one-on-one time with the child than the parents or others and may be in a better position to discover special needs or exceptional abilities that are going unnoticed. "As educators, we can soften a hard situation by being supporters of these children," Davidson said.

Davidson sees three major problem areas. Foremost is the lack of awareness that homeless children often do not have access to education. Another is the lack of communication of homeless children's rights and protections. The third problem is the lack of coordination of services to homeless families and children, such as rental housing subsidy programs, health and employment programs. That lack of coordination ultimately affects the child's education.

In his role as state director, Davidson is advising school systems, social workers, shelter personnel and homeless parents about options for access to education for homeless children. He sees himself as an advocate who is trying to make a difference in children's lives and says the state plan's focus is access. "In our society, children are a different entity. Children don't have a voice. We have to be that voice," he said. ◆

1990 Census

A lot of people will be playing jokes on each other this April Fool's Day, but the government and other people interested in our social welfare are banking on us taking one thing seriously. April 1, 1990, is Census Day, U.S.A. For those of us in the child advocacy business, the 1990 census provides a great opportunity to make sure each child in Georgia receives the full and equal benefits to which he or she is entitled.

Demography experts say the U.S. population has shifted to the Sunbelt. Projections show that Georgia will replace North Carolina on the list of the 10 most populous states. We are one of only 16 states to have an increase in elementary and secondary school enrollment from 1980 to 1986. For the first time since Reconstruction, more black people are moving back to the South than are leaving it. All of these factors point to significant changes in population that will focus attention on special groups, such as ethnic minorities and homeless youth. If a complete count is not gotten, our children will bear the burden, because school and social welfare services are funded based on the census count.

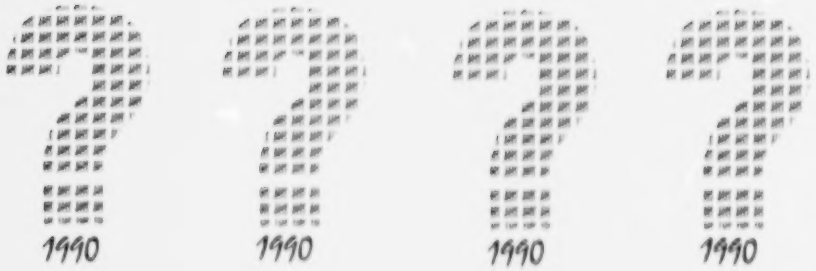
According to Ken Baldowski, regional information officer at the U.S. Bureau of the Census, three issues must be communicated about the census. First, the census is easy. The regular census form is simple and takes 15 minutes to fill out.

Second, the census is safe and confidential. Individual information cannot be made public for 72 years and will not be shared with any other government agency. People hired to help take the census (enumerators) have been screened and are subject to a $5,000 fine and a jail term for divulging census information.

Third, the census is important to individual and community benefits. If you are not counted, federal and state funds you or your community may deserve won't be forthcoming. No one will know you exist.

"This is the information that will take us into the next century," said Peyton Williams Jr., associate state superintendent for instructional programs and chairman of the Governor's 1990 Census Complete Count Task Force. "If the predictions are right, Georgia will be getting another U.S. Representative. We need an accurate count to ensure adequate federal and state funding of programs that help students and their families."

At the end of March, census forms will be mailed to every household in the country. We are being asked to fill out the



form and return it by April 1 in the postage-paid envelope provided. One in every six households will receive a longer form that takes about 30 minutes to complete. At the end of April, enumerators will visit households that did not respond. The final population counts will be compiled and presented to the President on December 31, 1990.

From these figures, more than $37 billion in federal funds will be distributed to the states.

Allocation of funds

These federal dollars mean much to the well-being of Georgia students. Public education programs in which Census Bureau data are used to allocate funds include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), migrant education, vocational education, school and community nutrition, public library services and construction, teacher staff development, programs to improve schools (block grants), adult education and drug-free schools and communities grants. Other federal programs that directly affect Georgia children are Head Start; Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Programs for abused, neglected, runaway and homeless youth; rental housing programs; health and welfare programs; employment training; and agriculture programs.

The Census Bureau has made extra efforts in the education arena for the 1990 census. Last spring, the bureau sent a comprehensive resource kit, the Census Education Project (CEP), to every principal in the nation. The kits were developed by educators and demographers and are appropriate for kindergarten through 12th grade. They include an educator's guide; classroom lessons that introduce students to the purpose of the census and how data is collected, analyzed and used in everyday life; and suggested activities to promote census participation in communities. Some of these materials are translated into Spanish.

Officials at both the Census Bureau and the Georgia Department of Education are hoping that students will encourage their parents to fill out the census forms sent to their households. In homes where parents speak another language or are not literate, informed students can help their parents fill out the form.

Counting the homeless

If April 1st is Census Day, March 20th is Census Night. From 4 p.m. March 20 through 6 a.m. March 21, census enumerators will be out taking a count of homeless people. They will take counts in the shelters, and when shelters are filled for the night, they will count homeless people staying on the streets to get a more accurate count. This special plan is a result of input from advocates for homeless people and the realization that the homeless count in the 1980 census was short. Legislation and dollars earmarked for services to the homeless will be based on the count of this census. Of course, a complete count of homeless children is the focus of educators, so services and the best education possible can be provided for them.

The all-out effort to educate the public and students about the importance of the census and the extra effort to get an accurate count of special populations should result in forthcoming aid to those most in need, including Georgia's children. ◆

Georgia schools go beyond 'just say no'

(Continued from page 25)

450,000 students participating. It showed alcohol as the drug most preferred by students in every region of the state.

Marijuana was the most preferred illicit drug. Eighteen percent of students in grades nine through 12 and 4.2 percent of students in grades six through eight reported smoking marijuana in the past year. Generally, older students used marijuana more frequently. Almost 33 percent of 12th graders reported using marijuana in the past year; seven percent of them reported using marijuana once or more a week.

Almost four percent of seniors reported using cocaine at least once during the year; nearly 15 percent of them reported having friends who use cocaine.

Students said they use drugs most on weekends. The most popular places for drug use were (in order) at home, another place in the community and in a car. School was reported less than any other place.

The 1989 survey showed a modest reduction in some drug use by senior high students, but overall use had not changed. However, students at every grade level (6-12) reported every type of drug easier to obtain today than in 1987.

The temptation to use drugs remains a constant and unabated threat to the future of our children. But it is a threat that can be lessened by educating young people about the harmfulness of drugs. It is a threat that can be lessened if parents actively work to prevent their children from becoming involved. And it is a threat that can be lessened if communities rid themselves of the supplies and suppliers of drugs.

With drug education in our classrooms, skilled counselors in our schools and determined parents in our communities, we need not lose our eight year olds to drug pushers; our 12 year olds' alcoholism need not go untreated; and our teens need not perish in the grasp of a craving stronger than survival. ◆

Teaching Tolerance

A World of Difference

By Kristin L. Summerlin

Look up the word "different" in any dictionary. Nowhere is it defined to mean "bad," "evil," "stupid" or "wrong." And yet, in many people's vocabularies, different does mean those things. From this subtle misunderstanding arise fear and distrust of people who are perceived as different and, in some cases, acts of violence against them.

Schools and schoolchildren are not immune to such prejudices, but a program sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Georgia Power Company, WAGA-TV of Atlanta and the Milken Family Foundation hopes to help children (and their parents and communities) understand and accept each other's differences.

Called "A World of Difference," the national program pairs a classroom component of materials localized to the community with a media sponsor (in this case, WAGA-TV) and a community coalition. Just getting under way in Georgia, the program was piloted in Boston in 1985 and has spread to almost 30 cities across the country. At press time, the program had commitments from most of metro Atlanta, several Regional Educational Service Agencies, Muscogee and Dougherty counties and several private and parochial schools.

Ginger Carter, B'nai B'rith's Georgia coordinator for A World of Difference, said the program specifically addresses three prejudicess: racial, religious and ethnic.

"The philosophy of A World of Difference is that it is the differences in all of us that enrich our world, and that by understanding the differences and working together, we can make a world of difference," Carter said.

"We specifically address only racism, ethnicism and religious prejudice, but our feeling is that we begin with these, and from there people can deal with other prejudices. If you become more sensitive to racial or religious generalizations, then you also become sensitive to age generalizations or sex generalizations. The awareness builds from there."

Includes Georgia examples

The classroom materials are written especially for middle and high school students, but the curriculum includes a packet of suggested lessons for elementary teachers. The lessons encompass American history, world history and geography, as well as a special section on Georgia history written by Catherine Kimble, a fifth-grade teacher at Benefield Elementary School in Gwinnett County.

"I was interested in getting involved because I could see a real need to develop the ability to tolerate other people's differences in general, even in my classroom," Kimble said. "I could see the children's tendencies to pick on each other, and I wanted to help figure out ways to help them understand each other and see how their behavior can hurt."

To develop the Georgia component, Kimble went through a collection of newspaper clippings about instances of prejudice in Georgia (for example, negative reactions to the increased presence of Japanese investors in our state or graffiti painted on the walls of a Jewish school). From the clippings she wrote a vocabulary section for a range of ages, summaries of the articles, discussion questions and problem solving activities.

"I tried to make sureno opinion was expressed," Kimble said. "We want students to talk about current events and relate them to their own lives. So we ask, 'How would this make you feel?' 'What would you do in this situation?'

"The children seem to enjoy talking about 'adult' problems and listening to each other's solutions. And I can tell that this has helped in my classroom. My students seem more aware of how they treat each other, and it has made me more aware of problems that might have been frustrating to them."

It is significant that the program begins with children, because children must be taught to hate. "Prejudice is not something you're born with; you learn it from the time

you can walk and talk," Carter said. "And even before that, a child's mother and father through nonverbal cues give signals for how a child should or shouldn't behave, who the child should or should not talk to."

A World of Difference doesn't try to force people to change their thinking as much as it focuses on awareness, Carter said.

"Deep down, we all know we have prejudices. Even teachers: It may be something as simple has having the brighter students sit in the front of the classroom or giving students privileges because you like their sense of humor – or sending the really tough students out on errands to get them out of the classroom. The difference is in being aware of what your own prejudices are and how they affect your life, how they can be dangerous," she said.

"We want to teach children how to choose not to generalize, how to choose not to be prejudiced. We're not going into classrooms and saying, 'You're prejudiced, and someday I'm going to change that.' We offer our materials in the spirit of helping people make choices, helping students handle prejudice if they experience it. It's very positive and upbeat."

For instance, in one exercise elementary students are given oranges and asked to examine them closely. The oranges are then put in a pile on a table, and the students are asked to retrieve their own orange from the pile.

"Usually, they can do it very easily, because they've seen how each orange is unique," Carter said. "Then we discuss how oranges are oranges, but this orange is different from the others, and how Mary and Susie are both girls, but one looks one way and the other looks different. People are people, but people are different, and it's okay to be different. We can still be friends if we're different."

The children's lessons are reinforced in their homes and communities through activities sponsored by the media and community coalitions.

"While their teachers are telling them in the classroom that different is different and you can be friends even if you're different, Channel 5's programming will show them instances of people who are different working together in news specials and features," Carter said.

The community coalitions will also have special activities, such as a night with the Atlanta Hawks and a festival at Underground Atlanta during Memorial Day weekend. "These activities reinforce that the program is something for all of us, not just for kids in school," Carter said.

To teach A World of Difference, teachers must complete six hours of training. The program must first be endorsed by the school system and superintendent, and someone must be assigned to work with it.

The materials are free of charge to participating systems. No teacher is required to attend training, and even after completing the sessions, teachers are not required to use the materials.

"We're saying, 'Use this program as it best fits your classroom. If you see a lesson that will help, use it,'" Carter said. The lessons are currently being correlated with objectives in the Quality Core Curriculum.

"Awareness grows," Carter said. "It starts out small, but it grows. The more aware you are, the more you can be proactive in making changes. And that's what we hope will happen in the classroom. We want students to stop and think."

For more information on how to get involved in A World of Difference, contact Ginger Carter at (404) 262-3470. ◆

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